

Recycling Away from Home

Today, just about everyone seems to be carrying cans of soda and plastic bottles of water with them when they're on the road, at work or at play. These containers are ideal for "people on the go." When you're at home you dutifully put these in your recycling bin when they are empty, but what do you do with them when you're away from home?

Unfortunately, most people throw them away because it's not easy to recycle when you're "out and about." Too often, recycling bins can't be found at parks, ball fields, fair grounds, street corners, convenience stores, or malls. Most of these places have trash bins and customers, spectators and visitors faithfully use them – for trash and recyclable bottles and cans!

For a number of reasons, the owners and managers of most of these facilities are not providing adequate, separate containers for recycling, even though the State Recycling Law and local ordinances require them to do so. Maybe facility managers once provided recycling barrels for their residents or customers, but they didn't work because customers and users also threw trash into them. Maybe building managers thought they were complying with the law by providing recycling services for their employees and didn't think about their customers. Maybe they didn't think they would recover enough bottles and cans to make recycling worthwhile.

No matter what the reason, recycling barrels frequently are not available when people are out and about, and a lot of aluminum cans and plastic bottles are being thrown away. If DNR estimates are correct, we're throwing away almost \$20 million worth of aluminum cans and plastic soda and water bottles a year.

We need to take more responsibility for the cans and bottles we carry around and ensure they get recycled, even if that means bringing these containers home to recycle or asking for recycling services at places we go. If enough people do this, we'll conserve some valuable natural resources, help local governments with their recycling program, and maybe start seeing recycling barrels show up where you go when you're away from home.